

Shattered Dreams Part 7

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SHATTERED DREAMS

PART 7

It was one o'clock in the morning and Dottie couldn't sleep. She was witnessing her daughter destroy her own happiness and there was nothing she could do. She sat in her bed desperately searching for a way to reach her, but to no avail. Dottie knew that, after everything Amanda had gone through with Jamie and losing the baby, she would never survive losing Lee too. She got out of bed and quietly stepped into the hall. The house was dark and silent. She made her way downstairs to the kitchen, grabbed the address book next to the phone and leafed through it until she found Lee's number. She picked up the receiver, let out a long sigh, then dialed.

The phone rang several times and Dottie was rehearsing in her mind what she would say when Lee finally answered.

"Hello?" His voice was groggy and unrecognizable.

"Lee?"

"Dottie? Do you know what time it is?"

"Lee, I know it's late, but I had to talk to you and I didn't want Amanda to know I called."

"What is it, Dottie?" He was fully awake and slightly irritated.

Dottie tried to collect her thoughts. She'd forgotten how she planned to say what she wanted to say.

"Don't give up on her, Lee," she blurted out. "Don't give up on your marriage."

Dottie could hear the pain in his voice and, as he spoke, she knew he was choking back tears.

"What do you want me to do, huh? She rips my heart out and you want me to keep going back for more?"

"I know how much she's hurting you now, but you've got to believe me - she isn't herself...you know that. This whole thing - Jamie, the baby, everything - it's all too much for her to handle. She's blaming herself for everything and she's angry with herself. She doesn't know how to deal with that anger so she's misdirecting it at everyone around her."

"I realize all this, Dottie, but I don't..."

"I know she can get through this, Lee...but not if she doesn't think you'll be waiting on the other side when she does. She'll have no reason to. So, please, please don't give up on her."

"I'm not making any promises, Dottie," he said after a long silence. "I don't know how much more of this I can take."

Later that day, Amanda mistook her mother's exhaustion for brooding. She didn't get much sleep herself the night before and she was on edge. She still couldn't believe what had happened; how the argument with Lee escalated to the impending destruction of their marriage. 'What am I doing to my life?' the thought crept from the back of her mind, only to be smothered by a persistent hostility.

Amanda stood behind Dottie who was seated at the kitchen table, drinking a cup of coffee.

"Cheer up, Mother. You should be happy. I've decided to quit the agency and it looks like my marriage is over - everything you want."

Dottie shook her head, growing weary of the emotional roller coaster.

"Is that what you think? Well, you're wrong."

Amanda let out a sigh as she sat across from her mother.

"Amanda, all I want...all I ever wanted was for you to be happy. You certainly aren't now are you? You know, as much as I hated the thought of you having such a dangerous job, at least you were happy doing it. And, as for your marriage...sure, I was shocked and hurt, but I can handle it." Amanda gave her a doubtful look. "Oh, come on, Amanda, you know how I feel about Lee. And, I know how you feel about him. I've never seen you happier then when you're with Lee. I honestly think that you love him much more than you ever loved Joe."

Amanda could feel her throat tighten and an aching in her heart. "All

that's over, now," she choked.

"But, it isn't, Amanda! You have got to stop embracing the pain and anger. What happened to Jamie was not your fault. You did not give up your baby. You didn't have a choice - the doctor may have made it sound like you did, but you didn't. But, the rest...the rest is your doing. You are throwing away all the things that make you happy...for what? To punish yourself? Well, it may be working, but you are also punishing everyone who loves you. And, eventually, you're going to lose them all."

Amanda sat in silence, her head in her hands, for a long time. When she finally spoke her voice was full of hopelessness.

"What am I going to do, Mother? I feel like my whole life is falling apart."

Dottie reached across the table and took her daughter's hand in hers. "Put it back together."

"I'm not sure I know how."

"Go back to the basics," Dottie gave her a smile. "Figure out what you really want, then go from there. You're gonna have to quell that stubborn nature of yours, and you're gonna get pretty full from all the pride you'll be swallowing, but, I think it'll be worth it."

Dottie was about to leave the kitchen, when Amanda got up and stood in her way. She embraced her mother, who returned the gesture.

"One thing I know I really want is for us to be O.K. I love you Mother, and I'm so sorry for all the lies and the hurt I caused you. Can you ever forgive me?" She started to cry.

Dottie, tears in her eyes as well, replied, "You're my daughter, and I love you...of course I forgive you."

Amanda knew that she had a lot of mending to do, but she was finally beginning to feel as if she was going to be all right. She thought of Philip, and what she had put him through. She was so worried about Jamie that she neglected her oldest son. Then, she turned on him as she had everyone else. She couldn't believe how selfish she had been all this time. Everything had been about 'her'. 'She' lost her baby - well, hadn't Lee suffered that loss as well? 'She' almost lost Jamie - Joe, Philip and her mother had gone through the ordeal too, right along side her, and she hadn't even noticed. Even Lee, who had come to love and care for the boys as much as any father could. He was there, through it all.

Amanda released her mother and kissed her warmly on the cheek. "I need to talk to Philip."

"Yes, you do."

She found Philip in the den, watching television. She wasn't sure what she would say to him.

"Where's your brother?" She opted to start off slow.

"Upstairs, asleep."

"Well, the doctor said he would tire easily for a while, but he should have his strength back in no time."

Philip noticed the pleasant change in his mother's mood and decided to ask the question that burned in his mind.

"Mom, can I ask you something?"

"What is it, Sweetheart?"

'Sweetheart?' He wondered. 'What's going on?'

"Well, I know me and Jamie are totally different. You're always saying Jamie's the more sensitive one...do you think things would be different if...if it had been me instead of Jamie?"

Amanda looked at her son. She could barely speak. "Oh, God, Philip. Is that how I've made you feel?" She couldn't hold back the tears.

Just then, Dottie walked in and went to Amanda. She knelt beside her and put her arm around her. At the same time Philip went to his mother to comfort her.

"It's all right, Mom. Please don't cry."

"It's not all right. Look what I've done to you - to everyone around me. You must really hate me."

"I don't hate you, Mom. I love you. I know this hasn't been easy for you."

Philip held his mother and they cried together. Amanda repeatedly apologized and reassured him that she loved him. As they became a family once again Jamie, thought to be asleep, zipped up the duffel bag he had just packed and shoved it under his bed, set his alarm for five o'clock, then crawled into his bed.

It was early evening when Dottie asked Amanda about Lee.

"I thought I would go see him tomorrow. I just don't think I could face him right now. I don't have the strength after today. I'm afraid he might not even see me."

"He'll see you," Dottie said, knowingly.

Lee sat on the couch in his apartment, staring at the television. He wasn't watching, wasn't even paying attention. He was wishing he was working on an assignment or at the office doing paperwork, anywhere but here. The one time he needed to be busy to keep his mind off Amanda - if he could keep his mind off her - things at the agency had slowed almost to a halt. He glanced at his watch. Ten o'clock on a Sunday morning. He still had the whole day to get through. The sound of the doorbell gave him a start and he reluctantly went to the door. On the other side was the one person he never expected to see - Amanda.

"Hi." It came out in a whisper.

He said nothing.

She cleared her throat, and tried to be strong. "Can I come in?"

Still, he said nothing, but moved aside and gestured for her to enter. She could see he was not going to make this easy, and why should he? After the way she had treated him she was lucky he didn't slam the door in her face.

"What are you doing here? I thought we were through," he said in an icy tone.

Amanda tried a light approach, hoping to keep herself from breaking down yet again. "I, uh...was...in the neighborhood and...thought I'd ...stop by...to beg your forgiveness."

The light approach didn't work, as the tears started to flow and she felt her knees giving. She quickly moved to the couch and sat down. She took in a deep breath and let out a long sigh. She knew she had to get the words out before she lost the ability to speak. In a rush she poured out her heart to him.

"I know how terrible I've been to you, to everyone. I can't explain my behavior. All I know is I felt so much anger for everything that happened and you suffered for it. You didn't deserve it...I don't deserve you. You've been so good to me, and I've been..."

Amanda couldn't go on. Her voice broke and she sobbed into her hands. Lee fought the urge to take her in his arms and comfort her. He wasn't going to give into her tears...not this time. Not after the hell she'd put him through...and...and...he couldn't stand to see her cry. His heart would not allow him to be so willful. He sat beside her and pulled her close. She buried her face in his chest and cried until his shirt was soaked with her tears.

"Does this mean I've got the old Amanda back?" Lee asked.

"I'm...trying," she answered through ragged breaths.

"That's a start."

"Oh, Lee, I love you so much. I don't want to lose you. I need you in my life. Please forgive me."

Lee held her at arms length and brushed the hair from her face.

"You are my life...my soul mate. How could I not forgive you?"

Amanda threw her arms around his neck and held him tight. He gently pushed her just far enough away to look into her eyes. He wiped the remaining tears from her face and she kissed him softly on the lips. As he returned the kiss, a little more passionate this time, Amanda could feel all the negative emotions that had threatened to devour her very existence drain from her body - to be replaced by the warmth of emotions that Lee, alone, had the power to reawaken in her. The walls that had gone up between them began to crumble from the

strength of their love.

They were interrupted by the ringing of the telephone and Lee reluctantly got up to answer it. It was Dottie.

"Hi. Amanda's right..."

"Lee, wait!" Dottie sounded frantic.

"What's wrong?"

"Jamie's gone. He's run away."

Lee looked over at Amanda. Her smile faded as she saw the growing concern on his face.

"We'll be right there." He told Dottie, then hung up the phone.

End
file.